
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Sludge Quality Certification Requirements

Why is Certifying by DES Important?

Sludge is certified to determine its quality and variability prior to recycling and to establish if it meets state (Env-Wq 807) and federal (40 CFR part 503) standards. Sludge quality certification (SQC) assures that it is safe for sludge to be placed on ground surfaces for beneficial reuse, a recycling technique known as "land application." Land application is an agricultural activity that makes use of the nutrients and organic matter in sludge to grow crops.

Are "Sludge" and "Biosolids" the Same Thing?

"Biosolids" is defined by RSA 485-A:2, XXII and Env-Wq 802.06, as "any sludge derived from a sewage wastewater treatment plant that meets the standards for beneficial reuse specified by the department [of Environmental Services]." So biosolids are a type of sludge derived from a sanitary source that has an SQC.

Who Needs to Apply for Sludge Quality Certification?

Any public or private treatment facility that generates sludge, which is going to be recycled by land application, including short paper fiber from paper mills.

What Needs to Be Included in a Sludge Quality Certification Application?

Information about the facility, including the quality and quantity of sludge it generates, as well as information about the industries and the types of chemicals that are discharged to the treatment plant.

When Does Certification Expire?

A SQC expires five years from the date it is issued by DES.

What Are the Requirements in Order for Sludge to Be Sludge Quality Certified?

To receive SQC, it must be demonstrated that sludge generated by a facility consistently meets all state and federal standards. State rules require that sludge not be hazardous, that it meets all pathogen reduction and vector attraction reduction requirements, that it does not exceed specific standards listed in the rules, and that, in general, it is not a threat to the public or environment. If the sludge to be certified is not generated in New Hampshire, then it must meet the standards of the state of origin or New Hampshire's, whichever is more stringent.

How is Sludge Tested to Verify that SQC Requirements are Being Met?

Prior to making an application for SQC, sludge generated at a facility must be sampled four times at least 60 days apart over the course of a year. The data from the test results of these samples are submitted with the application.

Once a facility receives SQC, its sludge must be periodically sampled and tested. The testing frequency is based on the amount of sludge generated by the facility, ranging from once per month for large facilities, down to twice per year for small facilities.

Is There Independent Verification of SQC Requirements?

Yes. DES periodically takes sludge samples from certified wastewater treatment facilities and biosolid samples from stockpiles at land application sites. These samples are analyzed at an independent laboratory to verify that all SQC requirements are being met. An annual report of findings is prepared and submitted to the New Hampshire Legislature.

What Happens if Tested Sludge Does Not Meet the Requirements?

If the test results submitted with the SQC application do not meet state and federal rules, the application is denied. If test results from the periodic sampling of sludge at certified facilities demonstrate that requirements are not being met, land application of any sludge from that facility is halted. Land application can restart only after a series of samples from each stockpile at each site are collected and analyzed and results are submitted to the state for review and approval. Once a facility has received approval to restart land application, the frequency of periodic samplings is increased to weekly until it can be demonstrated that no standards are violated for four successive weeks, then adjusted to monthly for a six month period.

What Information Needs to Be Regularly Reported in Order to Maintain Sludge Quality Certification?

An annual report must be submitted by the last business day of January containing information about the facility, including the quantity of sludge generated, the results of all required testing, and the location and amount of biosolids land applied.

For More Information

To download a copy of Env-Wq 800, the Sludge Management Rules, go to www.des.nh.gov/rules/desadmin_list.htm.

If you have questions, please feel free to call the DES Residuals Management Section at (603) 271-2818.